



*News Release from Congressman*

# ROB SIMMONS

SECOND DISTRICT, CONNECTICUT

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CONTACT: JOHN GOODWIN  
202/225-2076

## HOUSE PASSES ANTI-PRICE GOUGING LEGISLATION

*Measure Puts Forth Strict Criminal Penalties; Fines For Energy Companies Caught Sticking It To Consumers*

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, today announced the House of Representatives approved legislation that applies criminal penalties and fines of up to \$150 million for energy companies caught price gouging.

By a vote of 389 - 34, the House passed H.R. 5253, a bill which prohibits price gouging in the sale of gasoline, diesel fuel, crude oil, and home heating oil. The measure calls for penalties of up to \$150 million for refiners and other wholesalers and \$2 million for retailers. Wholesalers and retail outlets such as corner gas stations and service station chains face penalties triple the amount of their unfair profit, and violators also could go to jail.

The bill also calls on the Federal Trade Commission to develop a definition of price gouging and pursue civil penalties if violations occur. Criminal prosecution would be up to the Justice Department and states.

"Americans are facing record gasoline prices, and many feel that Big Oil is manipulating these prices," Simmons said. "We must take steps to protect consumers against illegal price-gouging at the pumps."

Last week, the three-term congressman unveiled a number of initiatives aimed at lowering the skyrocketing costs of gasoline. On April 24, Simmons called on President Bush to launch federal investigations into the current high prices of gasoline. In his letter Simmons wrote, "In light of the dramatic increase in the cost of gasoline, I urge you to direct the Federal Trade Commission and Justice Department to launch an investigation into the cause of soaring gasoline prices." The president announced an investigation the next day.

On April 25, Simmons called for passage of H.R. 4384, the "Energy For Our Future Act." The bill, introduced by Connecticut Rep. Christopher Shays, would repeal tax breaks for the profitable oil and natural gas industries, raise corporate average fuel economy standards, and put forth incentives for the purchase of energy efficient appliances and energy efficient upgrades for homes. The legislation is endorsed by the Sierra Club, League of Conservation Voters, Natural Resources Defense Council, Union of Concerned Scientists and U.S. PIRG.

In an effort to help ease the burden of increased gasoline prices in Connecticut, the Second District lawmaker has also called on congressional leaders to pass H.R. 3683, the "Gas Tax Relief Act" - legislation that would temporarily suspend the 18.4 cents federal excise tax on gasoline.

Finally, at the request of Gov. Jodi Rell, Simmons introduced the "Ethanol Tax Relief Act," which will temporarily suspend the 2.5 percent tariff and 54-cent per gallon duty on the importation of ethanol until Jan. 1, 2007.

"I believe the federal government should do everything in its power to help lower the prices at the pumps," Simmons said. "While there is no quick fix that will restore gas supplies and lower prices, these are meaningful steps that the government can take to help alleviate the burden unexpectedly placed on working families across the nation."

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